

What is claimed is:

*Sub B17*

1. A method of assigning a user to a network chat room, the chat room for distributing messages received from chat room members to other chat room members, the method comprising:  
5 determining television programming viewed by a network user at a networked device; and  
7 assigning the network user to a chat room corresponding to the determined television programming.

1. 2. The method of claim 1, wherein determining comprises determining based on a channel tuned to by the networked device.

1. 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the networked device comprises a set-top box that receives television programming.

1. 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

1. 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the chat room comprises a chat room for a particular television show.

1. 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the chat room comprises a chat room for a particular network.

1. 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving a message from a network user assigned to the chat room and distributing the received message to other chat room members.

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8. The method of claim 1, further comprising  
2 determining whether to assign a person to a chat room.

1 9. The method of claim 8, wherein determining  
2 whether to assign comprises determining how recently the  
3 user was last assigned to a chat room.

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1 10. A method of assigning a user to a chat room,  
2 the method comprising:  
3 providing a user interface that displays television  
4 programming;  
5 transmitting identification of the television  
6 programming to a network server; and  
7 presenting a chat room that includes messages  
8 received by the network server by other users viewing the  
9 same television programming.

*Sub B<sup>1</sup>7* 11. The method of claim 10, wherein transmitting  
1 identification comprises transmitting a channel number.  
2

1 12. The method of claim 10, wherein transmitting  
2 identification comprises transmitting a television network  
3 identifier.

1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting  
2 identification comprises transmitting an identifier of a  
3 particular television program.

*Sub B<sup>1</sup>7* 14. The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting  
1 comprises transmitting in response to a change of channel.  
2

1           15. The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting  
2 comprises transmitting in response to user interaction with  
3 a user interface element.

1           16. A system for assigning a person to a chat room,  
2 the system comprising:

3                 server software resident on a network server, the  
4 software including:  
5                 instructions for distributing messages received  
6 by chat room members with other chat room members;  
7                 instructions for providing chat rooms  
8 corresponding to different television programming; and  
9                 instructions for

10                 determining the television programming  
11 tuned to by a networked device that receives television  
12 programming; and

13                 assigning a network user using the set-top  
14 box to a chat room based on the determined television  
15 programming; and;

16                 client software residing on a networked device, the  
17 client software including:

18                 instructions for transmitting identification of  
19 the television programming being displayed by the networked  
20 set-top box; and

21                 instructions for displaying chat room messages  
22 submitted by other chat room members.

1           17. A computer program, disposed on a computer  
2 readable medium, for assigning a user to a network chat  
3 room, the chat room for distributing messages received from  
4 chat room members to other chat room members, the program  
5 including instructions for causing a processor to:

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6 determine television programming viewed by a network  
7 user at a networked device; and  
8 assign the network user to a chat room corresponding  
9 to the determined television programming.

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1 18. A computer program, disposed on a computer  
2 readable medium, for assigning a user to a chat room, the  
3 program including instructions for causing a processor to:  
4 provide a user interface that displays television  
5 programming;  
6 transmit identification of the television  
7 programming to a network server; and  
8 present a chat room that includes messages received  
9 by the network server by other users viewing the same  
10 television programming.

CONFIDENTIAL

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*A5*

*Add B187*

*Add C'7*